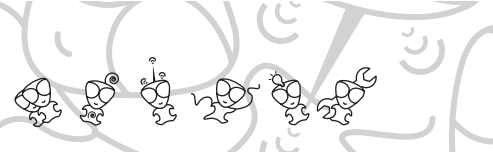




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Introduction

What are ‘team challenges’?

Team challenges are exciting, open-ended tasks that require teamwork, imagination and fast thinking to accomplish.

Who are team challenges for?

Team challenges can be used by teams of all kinds and in any situation where creativity and teamwork are valued. Teams should consist of between four and seven members. A team this size is big enough to benefit from the wide variety of ideas and talents of its members yet small enough to ensure that everyone is actively involved.

In an educational setting, team challenges are ideal for enrichment, extension and team-building purposes and in training students for competitions such as Tournament of the Minds, Odyssey of the Mind and Future Problem Solving. Team challenges are not restricted to school situations, however. They can be used by businesses, youth groups, scout groups, summer camps, senior-citizens’ groups or rowing teams, just to name a few! Team challenges are lively and original tasks to get teams bonding. They are for anyone who is game!

Why should I use team challenges?

Team challenges are designed to be demanding but fun; to enhance cooperation, creativity, risk-taking, and higher-level thinking skills. Participating in the challenges will help team members strike out of tired, routine ways of thinking and make creative leaps into the unusual and untried. However, as in most real-life enterprises, solitary genius is not sufficient – to be successful, a team will need to spend time listening to everyone’s ideas and utilise each member’s talents.

Teams will be required to produce lots of ideas quickly – this ability to brainstorm at supersonic speeds often leads to real gems. As Linus Pauling said, ‘The best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas.’

How the solutions and ideas are presented is important too. Many of the challenges call for teams to find imaginative ways to express their thoughts and inventions – they may never have tried opera before but ...

In summary, the skills, teamwork and ways of thinking encountered in team challenges can flow into and be of benefit in the everyday world of work, home, school and community.

How are team challenges designed to be used?

Team challenges are clearly written and are meant to be read aloud to competing teams. A list of simple materials and a score sheet for the judges is provided with each challenge.

Most tasks take around ten minutes to complete but specific time limits and other restrictions are explained in each challenge. Rules, time limits, the ensuing tiny sense of panic and the need to score add to the fun of the challenge – imagine the lack of excitement in a football game if the score or rules were

not important! Restrictions and time limits also help keep teams on task and ensure that each member's skills and talents are utilised. One could spend all day working on a problem, but it takes teamwork and clear thinking to achieve the same goal in ten minutes.

The challenges are meant to be judged – warmly and encouragingly, of course, but still judged. This aspect, like the restrictions, gives a sense of purpose to the endeavour. What exactly is being judged and how to score points is explained in each challenge. A premium is always placed on teamwork.

Of course the challenges can be adapted to suit your own teams and purposes by altering the restrictions, changing the subject to a topic studied in class, a major world event, your company's clientele, shared experiences or a particular competition.

The challenges are not intended to be watched by an audience, especially not an audience of other teams that are about to tackle the same task. There may be benefit, however, in winning teams 'performing' their solutions after the event or the judges sharing what worked with all competing teams at the end of the competition. To help with this, the 'comments' section of the mark sheet provides a space for the judges to record general comments about each team's performance. Certainly there should be some feedback – either written or spoken – to teams about how they went.

A word about warming up

The challenges in this book are rigorous and will usually require some prior practice in problem solving, creativity and cooperation. There are many good resources readily available that provide ways of practising these skills. I have included a section of warm-ups to give an idea of the kind of exercises that may help individuals and teams hone these skills in preparation for team challenges.

The challenges in this book have been tried and tested with many teams over a number of years. I hope that your teams enjoy them too.

Charlotte Samiec

Suggested resources

Suid, Murray (2003). *Thinking Start-ups: Independent Study Cards Years 3–6*. Melbourne: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Ellis, L. Julie (2004). *CPS: A User's Guide. A Handbook of Creative Problem Solving Techniques*. Melbourne: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Reid, Lorene (1993). *Thinking Skills Resource Book*. Melbourne: Hawker Brownlow Education.







Johnson, L. Nancy (1993). *Questioning Makes the Difference*. Melbourne: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Marcus, A. Susan & McDonald, Penny (1991). *Tools for the Co-operative Classroom*. Melbourne: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Fligor, Marty (1993). *Brain Storming: The Book of Topics*. Melbourne: Hawker Brownlow Education.

The format of the challenges




What the symbols mean:

-  → **Teamwork**
-  → **Creativity**
-  → **General knowledge**
-  → **Performance skills**
-  → **Strategic thinking**
-  → **Construction skills**

Below the title of each challenge is a group of symbols that indicate what team strength the challenge particularly exercises. Teamwork is vital in all.

Green spaghetti

Title

 Teamwork
 Creativity
 Performance skills

Materials: ← **Materials needed**

a food tin with the label removed, paper, pencils or pens, a timer

The challenge ← **The challenge – to be read aloud by judges to the team**

A disaster has occurred at the local spaghetti factory: somehow harmless green dye has found its way into thousands of tins of spaghetti just like the tin in front of you. Facing bankruptcy if unable to sell the green spaghetti, the manager of the factory has approached your team (already famous for creating hugely successful advertisements for things that no-one really wants or needs) for help.

Introduction

Your challenge is to create an advertisement, suitable for television, that will convince consumers to buy the green spaghetti.

The task

You will have 10 minutes to prepare your advertisement. A warning will be given after 9 minutes.

You will have 1 minute to perform the advertisement for the judges.

You will be scored as follows:

Teamwork during preparation and performance:	up to 20 points
Creativity of reasons why consumers should buy the green spaghetti:	up to 20 points
Entertainment value of the advertisement:	up to 10 points

Restrictions that apply

Scoring guidelines

Here is the challenge again. (Repeat challenge.)

Your time starts now.

The challenge should be read to teams twice

Start those timers!